There’s a shadow of reality that clashes with the festive spirit of this Purim newsletter.

There are plenty of reasons to rejoice. The research and publications produced by members of the Department and the historic production of Ram and Jael, to be staged next week. Several of our contributions for this issue, from Dr Lily Kahn, Sonti Ramirez, Charlotte Kirkham, Ben Whittle and Shoshana Perl, celebrate the arts, scholarship and – at the risk of sounding pretentious to convey honesty – life.

At the same time, Prof Stern and Prof Berkowitz draw our attention to serious events that will affect us all; Brexit, the government’s university reforms and the election of Donald Trump. We are reminded that we face a situation where life might soon become much harder for many of our friends and relations.

Prof Berkowitz’ article made me think of another historian, Timothy Snyder, who has also spoken about Trump. We should be weary of calling these times unprecedented, Snyder warns with historical insight. Such attitudes lead to a sense of despair. “Be as courageous as you can” is one of his pieces of advice drawn from the twentieth century in On Tyranny.

For me, actions tend to speak louder than words, which is not to say we don’t need brave words. But is also means that organising something, to celebrate life, for instance, counts for a lot at times when we might feel worn down and defeated. It can help build our feeling that we can find solutions together.

This edition of the newsletter was co-edited by me and Viktória Makai – I don’t think I would have been able to do it on my own! It certainly wouldn’t have been possible without the help of Vanessa Clarke and all the contributors – thank you so much to everyone!

I’ll be graduating this year, and I’ll miss everyone at the Department very, very much.

Happy Purim!! /David

Newsletter co-editors:
David Dahlborn & Viktória Makai
This somewhat belated Purim Newsletter looks back at our recent achievements in the Department of Hebrew and Jewish Studies. It also looks forwards to a number of major forthcoming events, including Lily Kahn’s production of a late 19th-century Hebrew translation of Shakespeare’s Romeo and Juliet at the Bloomsbury Theatre (on Tuesday 28 March 2017), and later this year, our celebration of 50 years since the founding of the Department – in preparation.

In the last six months, Neill Lochery has published no less than two books: a biography of Israeli prime minister Netanyahu entitled, not inappropriately, The Resistible Rise of Benjamin Netanyahu, and a sequel to his earlier work on Portugal in World War II, Out of the Shadows: Portugal from Revolution to the Present Day. Lily Kahn has branched out of Hebrew and published a book called North Sámi: An Essential Grammar.

We have also just launched a Departmental Essay Competition, which is open to all students in Year 12 (or final year of secondary school) in the UK and internationally. Prizes will be awarded for the best essays on any aspect of Hebrew and Jewish Studies, in the areas of history, literature, languages, culture, or religion. Candidates do not need to know Hebrew or to have studied the subject before. We hope that this competition will inspire school leavers to consider our Department for undergraduate study, where they will be able to take degrees in Hebrew and Jewish Studies, in Ancient Languages, or in a range of joint subjects with

“The Higher Education Bill, far from promoting the students’ interest, will only reinforce the system of tuition fees and plunge students into mounting debt.”

by Professor Sacha Stern
other languages or east European history. We are proud to be the first department in the whole of UCL to be running such a competition. Do encourage as many eligible students as you know to participate in it.

Meanwhile, the Department (actually, UCL and UK universities as a whole), is bracing itself for two potentially disastrous political changes: Brexit, and the Higher Education Bill. Both are going through the final stages in the Commons, almost simultaneously, as I am now writing.

Brexit will make it increasingly difficult for European students to study with us, which is a great pity, given the tremendous contribution they have made to the Department in the last few decades. It will also put at risk the accessibility of European research funding, which the UK is unlikely to emulate in the post-Brexit era. A research project such as mine, funded by the European Research Council and employing five research assistants, may then become a thing of the past.

The Higher Education Bill, far from promoting the students’ interest, will only reinforce the system of tuition fees and plunge students into mounting debt. The bill will make it easier for private providers to obtain degree- awarding powers, which risks exposing students to low-quality educational experiences at great personal expense.

The TEF (Teaching Excellence Framework), a new assessment scheme that is part of the HE bill, will cripple our Department with additional bureaucratic responsibilities and largely inappropriate assessment criteria. The TEF will be financially costly, it would put our teaching-related income at risk, and it will not promote the student experience or good teaching quality.

The UK is leading itself into disastrous political decisions, at least as far as Higher Education is concerned, largely because of politicians blinded by their own agendas, and because reliable information is being consistently withheld from a misguided public. If only politicians reflected on the personal debt they owe to the universities where they are (nearly) all educated, they might look at the picture differently.

These challenges, however, will not stand in the way of our pursuit of excellence in both teaching and research. Our first priority is Hebrew and Jewish Studies, and we will go on promoting the subject come what may.
Over the course of the past two terms, I have had the great privilege of working with twelve dedicated and talented Hebrew and Jewish Studies student actors on a production of *Ram and Jael* (Vienna, 1878), the first Hebrew-language version of Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet*.

*Ram and Jael* is a fascinating example of multicultural Shakespeare as well as a noteworthy Hebrew literary work in its own right. It was translated by Isaac Salkinson (1820-83), a Lithuanian Jew who, after a traditional yeshiva education, became an adherent of the Jewish Enlightenment and developed an interest in Hebrew literary translation. He travelled to London in the late 1840s, where he converted to Christianity. He subsequently trained as a Presbyterian minister in Scotland and was hired by the British Society for the Propagation of the Gospel among the Jews, who posted him to Vienna in order to conduct missionary work and translate the New Testament into Hebrew. Despite his conversion and missionary status, Salkinson continued to identify as a Jew and regarded Hebrew literary translation as an important life calling. In addition to *Ram and Jael* and his Hebrew New Testament, he produced a Hebrew version of Shakespeare’s *Othello* as well as of Milton’s *Paradise Lost*.

Salkinson’s translation comprises an element of the Jewish Enlightenment project to create a modern European-style literature in Hebrew at a time when the language was still primarily only a written vehicle, prior to its revival as a vernacular in fin de siècle...
Palestine. *Ram and Jael* was intended primarily for private reading by members of the Hebrew literary circles in Central and Eastern Europe. As such, it offers a unique and fascinating perspective on global Shakespeare. In this unusual version of the iconic play, characters have biblical names, references to Christianity and Classical mythology have been replaced with Jewish equivalents, and the lines are replete with a rich layering of biblical, rabbinic, and medieval Hebrew textual references. This type of domesticating translation strategy is typical of Hebrew translations of the Enlightenment era as well as of earlier translations into Hebrew and other Jewish languages dating back to the medieval period. Salkinson's striking choice to adhere to this domesticating paradigm despite his status as a convert and missionary is likely rooted in his sensitivity to the expectations of his intended Enlightenment Jewish readership, combined with his ongoing self-identification as a Jew and his intimate familiarity with Hebrew textual sources.

Never before performed on stage, our UCL production will bring Salkinson's groundbreaking work to life for the first time. The performance will take place in UCL's Bloomsbury Studio theatre and is funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council. The production will feature an abridged version of Salkinson's translation, accompanied by surtitles displaying the Hebrew text alongside an English back-translation.

The cast consists of current and former HJS students James Bejon as Gera (Gregory), Anthea Crane as the Prince, Nathan Eddy as Abiel (Capulet), Lucy Jennings as Meraioth (Mercutio) and Abiram (Montague), Viktória Makai as Jael (Juliet), Paul Moore as Paris and Hanan (Friar John), Anna Mudrecova as Abiram's Wife (Lady Montague), Charis Muir as Rezin (Friar Laurence) and Shimshai (Sampson), Sontí Ramirez as Abiel's Wife (Lady Capulet), William Skelton as Benvolio (Benvolio), Gabriella Smith as the Nurse and Tubal (Tybalt), and Ben Whittle as Ram (Romeo). Helen Beer has acted as our dramatic consultant over the course of the year.

The performance will take place on Tuesday 28 March, 2017 (see poster for details). For those unable to attend, the production will be filmed and uploaded to YouTube, so check the HJS Departmental website for details in the coming weeks!
Top Ten Reasons for Celebrating Purim
by Kenneth Goldrich

1. Making noise in shul is a MITZVAH!!
2. Levity is not reserved for the Levites
3. Nobody knows if you're having a bad hair day. You can tell them it's your costume.
4. Purim is easier to spell than Chanukah, I mean Hanukah, I mean, KHanukah, I mean Chanuka, I mean the Festival of Lights.
5. You don't have to kasher your home and change all the pots and dishes.
6. You don't have to build a hut and live and eat outside (but you could volunteer to build a new Purim booth for next year's Carnival)
7. You get to drink wine and drink wine and drink wine and you don't even have to stand for Kiddush (I guess you can't!)
8. You won't get hit in the eye by a lulav
9. You can't eat hamantaschen on Yom Kippur
10. Mordecai - 1 ; Haman - 0 !!!!

Male graduate seeks suitable lady

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When I was a kid, one of my favourite movies was Baz Luhrmann’s 1996 version of Romeo and Juliet, which featured Leonardo DiCaprio as Romeo and the uber-cool John Leguizamo as Tybalt. Since watching the film over a dozen times, I was extremely excited when Lily announced she was looking for characters to perform in the department production. The idea of having Romeo and Juliet in biblical Hebrew seemed unusual and interesting; there were so many possibilities. Where would it be set? Who would be the two families at war? Immediate thoughts of Beitar Jerusalem verses Hapoel football teams sprang to mind. What was so great about our adaptation was that we decided to bring in elements of historical Jewish societies into the play. We imagined the land of the Ram and Jael to be somewhere between 16th century Eastern Europe and ancient Jerusalem. The power dynamic was made even more interesting by the fact that Ram is Jewish and Jael is Christian, which made some of the scenes quite provocative. The production also managed to push boundaries in other ways – many of the characters are women who play men, rabbis and priests. It’s an interesting juxtaposition to the women of the two households, like my character Isha Shel Abiya (Lady Capulet), who attempt to negotiate with the deep seated patriarchy of the male characters. At the beginning, I was extremely apprehensive about rehearsing in biblical Hebrew. I didn’t have a clue how to speak Modern Hebrew, never mind anything else. It was incredible and inspiring to hear how fluent the whole cast was in the language, despite many having only learnt it for a few years. Each person brought something new and unique to their characters during the rehearsals and it was clear from the
start that everyone was taking it seriously. Some would practice at home, on the way to university and on busses. I spent more than a few hours in front of the mirror practicing my lines. The humour and high spirits of the cast made rehearsals a lot of fun; I felt like afternoon dress ups, and admittedly, it was a great way of putting my drama GCSE to use. Being part of the first ever Hebrew Romeo and Juliet performance was a special experience and I personally hope we will be able to perform the production again.
In the current academic year I am on sabbatical from my position at UCL. In the autumn of 2016 I was a William J. Lowenberg Fellow in American Jewry and the Holocaust at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, DC. I also conducted research regularly at the Library of Congress and the National Archives in College Park, Maryland. For the remainder of the winter and spring 2017, I am a fellow of New York University’s Remarque Institute. While lecturing outside Washington and New York I enjoyed short periods of work at the Harry Ransom Center of the University of Texas, the Firestone Library of Princeton University, the Baker Library of Harvard Business School, the Fortunoff Video Archive for Holocaust Testimonies at Yale University, and the Beinecke Library at Yale. The focus of my research has been on Eastern European and American Jewry’s engagement with photography during the interwar period and the Second World War, and my project extends to cinematography and film.

I’ve enjoyed the pleasure of sharing my work with colleagues and students at the University of Texas, Princeton University, the University of Southern Denmark, the University of Minnesota, the University of Michigan, Tufts University, Yale University, Harvard University, and Williams College. In the coming months I’ll also be visiting Amherst College, Smith College, Case-Western Reserve University, Haverford College, and Miami International University.

My time in Washington happily coincided with the completion and inauguration of the Museum of African American History and Culture on the Mall. I was fortunate to attend the opening gala, which included addresses by President Obama and former President George W. Bush, and I have

“The decision by the Board of Deputies of British Jews to send a congratulatory letter to Trump was appalling.”

by Professor Michael Berkowitz
since visited the museum twice. On the most basic level, both the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum and the Museum of African American History and Culture illuminate the discrimination and persecution suffered by their subjects.

The presence of these relatively new yet august Washington institutions renders a recent, shocking event in the nation’s capital all the more unsettling: merely hundreds of metres from these sites, a group explicitly aligned to Nazi ideology, the “Alt-Right”, met in the Ronald Reagan Building on 19 November 2016 to celebrate the election of Donald Trump and plan their agenda – now that one of their own is at the very centre of power. Indeed, one of the initial appointments of Donald Trump was Steve Bannon, the former (and not quite detached) head of the far-right Breitbart “news” outlet as his chief strategist. Bannon expressly cast Breitbart as the mouthpiece of the Alt-Right. The concluding session of the meeting elicited rousing applause and cheers of “Hail Trump” – replete with Nazi salutes. It was unabashed antisemitism of the most grotesque sort. In my worst nightmare I never imagined that Nazism would become “current events” in Washington, DC, in 2016. The racist, misogynist, xenophobic president-elect failed to be troubled enough by this vile demonstration – in his honour – to “tweet” his objection. (Trump has made it abundantly clear that twittering is the preferred medium for his most significant messages). His later attempts to distance himself from the antisemitism of his followers, and his horrifying Holocaust Memorial Day announcement - which did not mention Jews - show Alt-Right neo-Nazism as continuous, not an aberration in Trump's spectacularly racist and corrupt regime.

Regarding Statement by the President on International Holocaust Remembrance Day, January 27, 2017, it is important to revisit the text:

“It is with a heavy heart and somber mind that we remember and honor the victims, survivors, heroes of the Holocaust. It is impossible to fully fathom the depravity and horror inflicted on innocent people by Nazi terror.

“Yet, we know that in the darkest hours of humanity, light shines the brightest. As we remember those who died, we are deeply grateful to those who risked their lives to save the innocent.
“In the name of the perished, I pledge
to do everything in my power
throughout my Presidency, and my
life, to ensure that the forces of evil
never again defeat the powers of
good. Together, we will make love and
tolerance prevalent throughout the
world.”

Several of my colleagues have
remarked that this is a variety of
Holocaust denial. In my opinion, the
language was carefully chosen as part
of a long-term strategy to equate
abortion with the Holocaust, which
has been a tactic of fundamentalist
Christians for decades. The omission
of Jews was deliberate in order for
Trump to please two of his most
important constituencies: racist,
antisemitic, white supremacists, who
find many aspects of Nazism
appealing, and anti-abortion
extremists, who wish to minimize or
extinguish the notably Jewish
dimensions of the Holocaust.

These dark episodes lead,
disturbingly, to a connection with
present-day Anglo-Jewry. While it is
important to maintain respect for the
office of the president of the United
States – which was shamelessly
debased by Trump’s disgraceful, racist
“birther” campaign against President
Obama – the decision by the Board of
Deputies of British Jews to send a
congratulatory letter to Trump was
appalling. (This was, however, prior to
Trump’s infamous Holocaust
Remembrance Day statement). It
prompted a thoughtful, articulate
response by a number of concerned
young British Jews, some of whom are
associated with UCL, who protested to
the Board in a letter of 9 November
2016. The absurd epistle of the Board
to Trump, which managed to be both
fawning and pompous, also runs
counter to the hundreds of Jewish
historians, internationally, who publicly
expressed outrage at his campaign
rhetoric and subsequent “victory”. The
Board of Deputies chose to close its
eyes and minds to “the repeated
antisemitic expressions and
insinuations during the Trump
campaign. Much of this anti-Semitism
was directed against journalists, either
Jewish or with Jewish-sounding names.
The candidate himself refused to
denounce – and even retweeted –
language and images that struck [Jewish
historians] as manifestly antisemitic. By not doing so, his campaign gave licence to haters of Jews, who truck in conspiracy theories about world Jewish domination.” While Trump’s anti-Muslim and anti-Mexican invective is better known, the antisemitism of his campaign – despite idiotic protests that a (far-right) Jewish son-in-law immunizes him from antisemitism – was unprecedented for conjuring up antisemitic discourse in American presidential politics. Trump’s final campaign commercial featured the demonization of three Jews – Lloyd Blankfein, George Soros, and Janet Yellen – as the masters of dark forces conspiring to undermine America’s heart and soul. The Democratic party’s Senator Al Franken (Minnesota) was correct to say that it had a chilling “Elders of Zion” feel to it.

There are further reasons why I am alarmed. In 2007, I published a book, The Crime of My Very Existence: Nazism and the Myth of Jewish Criminality. The path to the Nazi stigmatization, persecution, and eventually, mass murder of European Jewry was eased through an evolving but dedicated policy of polemicizing against Jews — individuals and collectively — as “criminals.” The distinctive Nazi mix of racism and antisemitism is by now well known, and has been brilliantly dissected in numerous academic and popular histories. What I attempted to illustrate, however, was that Germans and other Nazi sympathizers lived easier with themselves as antisemites, and even mass murderers of Jews and Gypsies (Roma and Sinti) because it was possible to fixate on the supposed "criminality" of their opponents.

The President-elect, Donald Trump, deployed this canard, with regard to Secretary Clinton and President Obama, hundreds of times. He incited crowds to chant, “lock her up.” While on the one hand had he promised to appoint a special prosecutor against Hillary Clinton, he also pronounced judgment on her. In the very speech in which he announced his candidacy, he derided "Mexicans" as "rapists" and "criminals." For years he was the chief spokesman for the overtly racist "birther" campaign that sought to delegitimize the presidency of Barack Obama, charging that Obama had committed perjury in claiming that he was born in the United States. Trump's attempts to ban Muslims from the United States assumes that criminality is essential to their heredity and national origins, which is but a euphemism for his hatred and intolerance of Muslims in general.
Although it has now become impolitic to compare Trump to Hitler, it is important to ask: how far will he carry forward, in his deeds, his criminalization of Secretary Clinton and President Obama, as well as Mexicans and Muslims? Will the criminalization of Hispanics, Muslims and others he deems to be un-American, be transformed into policy—which is certain to be supported by the Republican controlled branches of government, including the Supreme Court?

I propose that Trump be impeached immediately. He has pledged to uphold and protect the constitution of the United States, but he has proven, from the outset, that he does not intend to respect equal protection of United States citizens. In addition, abundant evidence continues to mount that he and his colleagues have flagrantly abused their government positions for private gain, with conflicts of interest on an unprecedented scale. Donald Trump, as a person and president, is not normal—in the historical sense. Treating him, his officials, and spokespeople as normal would be a grave mistake.

This is excerpted from professor Berkowitz’s introduction to the forthcoming issue (48) of the journal I edit, Jewish Historical Studies: Transactions of the Jewish Historical Society of England (UCL Press).
These photographs show a 48x38 inch collage Charlotte Kirkham produced with the help of the Eaton Fund and The Jerusalem Biennale. It took two years to complete and is layered from paper, glitter and rhinestones (measuring 0.2mm). The Jerusalem Biennale celebrates Jewish themed art. The collage depict three friends modelling as Ahasverus, Esther and the Angel at the moment when Esther approaches the King to plead with him. Studies for the collage were exhibited in the Menier Gallery and the Mall Galleries, London in 2014 and 2016.
Ben Whittle’s research poster of Biblical Hebrew verbal stems in Greek translations was recently displayed as part of the UCL graduate poster competition.

The poster outlines Ben’s initial PhD research detailing how Biblical Hebrew verbal stems are translated into Greek in Genesis 12-16, showing how each binyan is translated and the frequencies of each strategy. His aim is to continue this research but for all the books of the Pentateuch.
David Dahlborn: Can you begin by telling us what is the book about?

Neill Lochery: The Netanyahu book is for me essentially about the history of Israeli politics for the last twenty-five years. I decided to write the book because I wanted to put down all the research I've done on Israeli politics for the last twenty-five years and when I started doing it that one man spanned the entire period since I've been an academic and that was Netanyahu. So why not do it on as a book on him? Rather than calling it 'Israel Politics: the last twenty-five years'. And from there I developed it into a profile of the man, I wanted to know more about how he was and what his motivations and why has he hung around so long I Israeli politics; it's a very long political career to have and in a few years' time he will succeed Ben Gurion as Israel's longest serving prime minister. This is quite an achievement, considering that when he was first prime minister people though he wouldn't survive very long. So it's been a very interesting journey for me to develop this project from being a book simply about Israeli politics to a book solely about Netanyahu.

DD: Why did you choose to concentrate on Netanyahu?

NL: There are other central figures, but for me was the most interesting. You could argue that Shimon Peres has been very influential over the last 25 years, but he's already been quite heavily written about. So I thought Netanyahu was the more interesting one because no one's done it, and secondly because he's in power at the moment. So it seemed to be relevant to the present - I'm a great believer in making history relevant to the present.

DD: What was the most interesting thing about writing this book?

NL: I think changing my perception of him. The more I wrote the book the more my perception of him changed. Not for good or for bad, because that's very simplistic, but more my understanding of him and his various ideas. The three key areas in Israeli politics are, one, the Arab-Israeli conflict; two, socioeconomic issues; and three, religious-secular issues. And on the third Netanyahu has remained remarkably consistent. He's very pragmatic and gives the religious parties what they want to join a coalition. The second issue is the most interesting I think because here he
went very much against the belief of his own party and the beliefs of very many of the voters who traditionally voted Likud. This is a man who introduced economic liberalisation, privatisation to Israeli, deregulation and opened up Israel to foreign investment. This social costs of doing this when he did this at the start of the century, was that it damaged the very voters who traditionally voted Likud. And that’s where he was the most interesting to me.

On the Arab-Israeli I think he’s much more pragmatic than people think he is. Many would view him as an ideologue, a typical Jabotinsky-following revisionist ideologue who views the Middle East in a certain kind of way and there seems to be this set view about that. But I disagree, I think he’s shifted, I think he potentially has the ability to shift in the future, but he needs pushing and inducements to do so. So what I thought was the most interesting was to discover that I believe is an ideologue on socioeconomic issues, and I think he’s really Thatcherite, Reaganite monetarist, and when it comes to the Arab-Israeli conflict he is a lot more pragmatic than people think, but it’s a lazy pragmatism and he needs inducements and he needs to be pushed in order to shift his position.

DD: What do you think others will take from the book? Will people who read this change their minds about Netanyahu?

NL: I’m not sure if people will change their minds. One of the things I’ve noticed about people’s reactions to this book is that everyone has a very deeply entrenched opinion about Netanyahu. What is interesting is that people have very different perceptions of him, but they are convinced they are correct. In terms of the book I hope people challenge in their own minds what they think about him and what they believed him to be like and possibly more relevant to that, where he’s likely to go in the future, providing he survives police investigations etcetera. I think it’s important to know in which direction he intends to lead Israel.

DD: What did you learn the most from writing this book?

NL: One of the most interesting things I learned was that US-Israeli relations which had been in the news because of the difficulties between Netanyahu and Obama have always suffered from various difficulties and crises throughout history. And even in modern times there have been a number of instances where there have been trouble between the US, and
Israel, generally over settlements but a few other things too. And that led me to think that it should prepare a new course to teach here about US-Israeli relations, because I think there is a big misconception about the special relationship being very ‘special’. In reality it’s been a very difficult relationship.

In terms of the man in think what interested me most about Netanyahu was that he was never really planning to go into politics. His older brother was the family leader, who his family hoped would one day become an IDF general, would then become chief of staff and then go on to become prime minister. Bibi was this middle child, a wanderer, not a loser by any means but someone who was bright, very good intellectually. But he lived in the shadow of his brother, and who if his brother hadn’t died in all probability would have become a very successful CEO of a middle-sized company, possibly in America, possibly in Israel. The other thing that I found hugely interesting was this perennial loneliness of the outsider. Despite almost becoming the longest serving prime minister in Israel, he’s still an outsider in his own country. I termed him a ‘stranger in a strange land’. It sums up Netanyahu; he’s never really accepted in America fully, he’s never really been accepted in Israel. And when you think about it is very odd to be leader of a country to be so identified with a country and still regarded by the elite and much of the population and still be regarded as an outsider. And in many ways yourself - which is more important than what people think of you - still feel as an outsider.

DD: What were the least interesting bits writing and researching this?

NL: I think the least interesting bits were the things journalists might have found interesting - the sexual scandals the innuendos, the rumours about Netanyahu's private life and specifically his wife, Sara Netanyahu. I put her in the book obviously as she is part of Bibi’s story but I really didn’t want to go down the road of talking about the alleged nastiness around her and the investigation into her treatment of nannies. And ‘bottle-gate’ as well - where she allegedly refused to return the refund money from all the bottles the Netanyahus had used instead of giving it to the state. But the press has covered this and people who are interested in it can go and find it, so that type of thing I really wanted to stay clear of, along with his other relationships with women. His early life and his early marriages, which to me wasn’t really relevant, because it was at
a time when it didn’t seem to impact on him very much - it was nasty, messy, etcetera, and didn’t seem relevant to a political biography.

**DD:** Who do you recommend should read the book?

**NL:** I very much hope people will read the book who are not only Arabs or Jews or Israelis. I very much hope people read the book who have a passing interest as well as a deep interest in the Middle East and have an interest in a couple of areas, not only Israel and the peace process but in leadership. Because I think there are certain lessons of leadership - good and bad - that come out from the book: resilience, the ability to come back, to recover when everything looks lost, what are people's expectations of leaders in Israel - are they different to other countries? So I hope people look at it for leadership. And also I hope Americans read it as well, because Donald Trump and Netanyahu are not the same type of politicians but there are similarities between them in some ways; in particular the ability to rise above party interests, they are both very populist in nature, there are one or two things that are think are interesting for people to read.

**DD:** Do you think Netanyahu will read it himself?

**NL:** I don’t know. I haven’t sent him a copy, he’d have to buy a copy. But he used to have a reputation of a man who read almost everything about him. I wrote a book about him and the peace process in 1999 which I believe he read. This one I’m not sure - he’s very busy as prime minister and has more important things to do than read books about himself. But he does read and he does like reading history books, he says he likes to relax by reading history books.

**DD:** So maybe when he retires and he’s trying to relax and he sits down and reads it, what do you think he would make of it?

**NL:** I think he would think it’s a relatively fair account of him. And he must be used of getting accounts that are not very fair, both from people outside of Israel, and in Israel itself. Israeli journalists clearly don’t like him - he has a very poor relationship with much of the Israeli media (another parallel with Donald Trump) - and the certainly used to being attacked a lot. I think this is a balanced, fair book and I hope he would see it as those two things.

*Thank you Professor Lochery for talking to us about your book!*
Introduction

There is anecdotal evidence of Jews living in the British Isles during the 1st century, but they were few in number. The first Jewish community arrived into England with the Norman invasion in 1066, encouraged to migrate by William I in order to stimulate commercial and financial development. This early medieval English Jewish community numbered about 5,000, with most Jews living in London, and small groups in York, Lincoln, Canterbury, Norwich, and Oxford. There were no special Jewish quarters, but there were generally two Jewish streets, one for the wealthy Jews, and one for the poorer ones; thus, in Oxford, there was Great Jewry Street, and Little Jewry Lane.¹ The Jewish community had autonomy to legislate on all internal Jewish matters through their own ecclesiastical courts. From 1177, provincial communities were allowed to set up their own cemeteries, outside the walls of their cities, so they did not have to rely on the Jewish cemetery in London.² In the City of London, near the Bank of England, Old Jewry Street exists to this day, in what was the Jewish ghetto in the 12th and 13th centuries. There is a plaque commemorating the Great Synagogue, which was closed in 1272 as the Jews

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suffered mounting persecution that eventually led to their expulsion by Edward I in 1290.

There was much about the tiny, insular Jewish community to promote suspicion regarding them. In addition to the fact that the Jews steadfastly clung to their beliefs and refused to recognise Christianity as the true religion, their association with the conquering forces made them unpopular with the local population. Furthermore, Jews were often prohibited from owning land, or becoming members of trade guilds, which were closely tied to the Church, thus limiting their choices for livelihood. At the urging of the Crown, the clergy and the barons and nobles, many Jews became money lenders, performing an essential service to the economy that the Christians could not fulfil, as they were prohibited by Church law from charging interest on loans (usury). Being associated with the conquering forces, living very separate lives, and engaging in money-lending inevitably led to considerable distrust and hostility on the part of the local population.

Legal Status

Because the Jews were the only ‘outsiders’ in an otherwise totally Christian society, they did not fit into the feudal hierarchy, but lived instead under the direct jurisdiction and protection of the Crown. Henry I, who assumed the throne in 1100, issued the Statutum de judaismo, a Jewish charter that guaranteed the Jews, among other provisions, freedom of movement throughout the country, relief from ordinary tolls, permission to retain land pledged as security, and special provisions to ensure a fair trial. The king benefitted greatly, as the Jews and their property were at his disposal; he conveniently reserved the right to levy special taxes on the Jews, thus obviating the need to negotiate for extra funds from his barons. This had the unfortunate secondary effect of forcing Jewish money-lenders to call in debts at short notice when faced with sudden new taxes, another fact that did not endear them to the Christian nobles.

3 www.medievallondon.fordham.ac
The Jews were most useful to the king when they were allowed to conduct business, generate credit and facilitate trade; this resulted in wealth-creation for the state, and in even greater tax revenues for the Crown. By the middle of the 12th century, however, a succession of weak rulers led to the breakdown of law and order, and it became dangerous to travel; Jews increasingly abandoned commerce and trade in favour of money-lending. In the late 12th century, the country experienced enormous economic expansion, with demand for credit making many Jews very wealthy in London, Oxford, Bristol, Norwich, and Lincoln. Indeed, when Aaron of Lincoln died in 1186, he was so wealthy that the Crown appointed a special exchequer just to evaluate Aaron’s holdings, for the purpose of death duties.\(^4\)

Because many Jews engaged in money-lending, their homes were sturdily built of stone, fortress-like, to provide secure protection for the stores of valuables that the Jews held as security on their loans. Two such houses from the 12th century survive to this day in Lincoln, one belonging to the aforementioned financier Aaron, and the other probably serving as a synagogue.

The perception of the Jews as being associated with the Royal Court attracted considerable resentment from the Christian population. This, in addition to the suspicion and mistrust surrounding the Jews for not accepting Christianity, and hostility towards them for their role as money-lenders, set the stage for waves of brutality and
violence against the Jewish communities.

**Accusation of Blood Libel**

Norwich, in East Anglia, was a particularly wealthy area of medieval England. There was a tiny Jewish community there of perhaps 200 persons, living near the castle (for protection), and chiefly working as money lenders and pawnbrokers. In 1144, this small community was at the centre of a shocking accusation. William, a young Christian boy, disappeared in the week before Pesach, and was last seen entering a Jew’s home. His body was found two days later in the woods outside the town. The boy’s mother and a local priest accused the Jewish community of murder, saying William had been killed in a re-enactment of Christ’s passion; Christian servants who worked in a Jewish home testified that the boy had been bound, as if on a cross, tortured with thorns and scalding water, and bled for the Jewish ritual of baking matzah for Pesach. The Christian mob was incited against the Jewish community, but the local sheriff shepherded the Jews to safety in Norwich Castle, claiming the Jews were under the protection of the King.

The Jews of Norwich were saved because they were a valuable asset to the King. But the damage caused to Jewish communities by the juxtaposition of an innocent and vulnerable child pitted against an evil, scheming and hated minority had devastating repercussions that resonated through the ages, almost up until modern times. The ritual murder of a Christian child at Pesach meshed easily with the official Church view that the Jews acknowledged the truth of Christianity but nevertheless continued to reject it. Furthermore, the Church declared William a saint, with power to work miracles by the nature of his ritual murder, an action that attracted pilgrims and wealth. This encouraged accusations of ritual murder to spread wherever a Christian child was killed in suspicious circumstances near a Jewish

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5 The Jurnet family was exceptionally wealthy, living in a large stone house, and generously supporting Jewish scholars.

6 The last blood libel accusation was against Mendel Beilis in Russia in 1913; he was found not guilty at trial.
community – Gloucester in 1168, Bury St Edmunds in 1181, Bristol in 1183, to name but a few – resulting in massacres of local Jews. The accusation of blood libel soon spread across the English Channel. In 1171, 31 Jewish men, women and children of Blois (central France) were tragically burned at the stake on 20th Sivan, despite the fact that a body had not even been found. The leading rabbi of the time, Rabbenu Tam, a grandson of Rashi, declared the 20th Sivan a fast day to commemorate this tragedy.

**Mob violence**

In September 1189, many Jews travelled to London to participate in the coronation of Richard the Lionheart, and to pay tribute to the new monarch. Two primary documents bear witness to the pogrom that ensued as Jews were attacked, with thirty killed, and their homes destroyed, one written by William of Newburgh, a monk of the Augustinian priory, and one written by Ephraim ben Yaakov of Bonn, with very different agendas evident in each. William of Newburgh wrote that nobody was brought to justice because the Jews deserved to suffer: “Without a doubt, it was ordained by God that those who were the ministers of divine vengeance upon the perfidious and blasphemous should not be subjected to human judgment on account of this.” Yaakov of Bonn, however, recorded that the King, upon hearing the commotion outside the palace, investigated, and “when the truth was revealed to the king, he ordered that the gatekeeper be tied to the tails of horses and dragged through the streets and marketplaces until he expire. Thus he

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8 20th Sivan is also commemorated as a fast day for a more recent tragedy: the deportation of nearly half a million Hungarian Jews to their deaths in Auschwitz in the summer of 1944.

9 Although wealthy Jewish homes were built of stone, they had thatched roofs which could be torched.
10 Ephraim ben Yaakov was a 12th century rabbi who served as the head of the Jewish court in Bonn, taught in the Academies of Speyer and Mainz, and wrote numerous commentaries on the Bible and the Talmud. He wrote Sefer Zechirah about the persecution of Jewish communities during his lifetime.
relieving themselves of the need to repay the Jewish debts to the King, who was the protector of the Jews. William of Newburgh acknowledged that “the greed for booty was the real motive of the riots in York.”13 Even if the Jewish creditor was alive, if the noble gave his land as collateral and could not repay his debt, the land reverted to the King, as Jews were forbidden from owning land. Thus the Jews were actually agents in increasing the power of the Crown by facilitating transfers of large tracts of land to the King. This special exchequer created in 1186 to monitor Aaron of Lincoln’s assets was expanded by Richard the Lionheart, who created a separate ‘Exchequer of the Jews’; twenty-five towns created special chests to house the records of all the Jewish transactions so that records could not be destroyed by insolent mobs. This was continued by Richard’s successors, creating the most extraordinary archival documentation of any medieval Jewish community in Europe.14

12 Many Jews of Norwich sought refuge in the castle; those who were found in their homes were murdered on 6 February, 1190. Johnson, p. 210.

13 Chazan, pp. 131-135.
14 The chests had three locks and keys: one key was kept by two Christians, one key was


In York, the frenzied mob was incited by members of the local gentry who were heavily indebted to the Jews; immediately after the massacre, the gentry set fire to the records of the debts which were kept at the cathedral,
Left: Map of medieval English Jewish communities, each of which stored Jewish records for the Exchequer of the Jews.

Below: British Library – 13th century charter in Hebrew recording a transaction with a Jewish moneylender; probably held by the Exchequer of the Jews.
Legal Restrictions

The barons had another pressing concern with regard to the Jewish money-lenders: if a debtor died before he had paid off all his debts, his estate would assume this burden, but the mounting interest often proved to be very difficult for under-age heirs and widows to bear. The Magna Carta, which the barons forced King John to sign in 1215, had two particularly ‘Jewish clauses’:

- **Clause 10:** If anyone who has borrowed a sum of money from Jews dies before the debt has been repaid, his heir shall pay no interest on the debt for so long as he remains under age.
- **Clause 11:** If a man dies owing money to the Jews, his wife is not obliged to pay off the debt from her inheritance, and the man’s under-age children shall be properly provided for before any debts are paid from their inheritance.

The solution was a freeze on interest payments until the heirs became adults, while the debt was only to be paid once appropriate living expenses had been guaranteed.  

The year 1215 was significant for European Jewish communities for another reason. The Pope convened the Fourth Lateran Council, in which it was decided that the Jews should wear a distinguishing mark on their clothing whenever they ventured outside the confines of the ghetto. England was the first to impose the compulsory wearing of badges for Jews. In 1222, the Council of Oxford required that the badge be in the shape of two tablets, be two fingers broad and four long, and different from the colour of the garment. The white colour was subsequently changed to yellow, the size increased, and the obligation extended to women as well. The intention of the Church was to easily distinguish the Jews from the Christian population so that they could be spattered with mud, publically humiliated, and even attacked; they were often robbed of their clothing and possessions, on the pretext that they did not display the regulation badge.

15 www.momentmag.com
16 Guido Kisch, “The Yellow Badge in History,” Historia Judaica, XIX, October 1957, pp 89-139
Impoverishment and Expulsion

Important and prosperous Jewish communities, such as that in York, had been destroyed, leading to a dramatic economic decline during the 13th century. As an example, Aaron of York, who had paid the king over 30,000 marks, died a pauper in 1268. But the English monarchs of the 13th century continued exerting pressure on the Jewish community to finance their coffers. Between 1240 and 1260, the small English Jewish community of 5,000 souls provided more than £70,000 to the Royal Treasury. Edward I forbade the Jews from taking property as collateral on loans, thus restricting the ability of the Jewish community to earn a livelihood, whilst at the same time levying increasing taxes. The Jews were forced into small-scale lending, coin-changing, and pawn broking, until Edward forbade usury altogether in 1275. In 1278, 300 Jews were hanged for practising usury in the Tower of London, and their assets confiscated by the Crown, thus whetting Edward’s appetite for more. A new libel arose – that of ‘coin clipping,’ which accused the Jews of shaving off gold from coins, so that the coins no longer weighed what they should; hundreds more Jews were executed under this libel. As Edward tightened the noose around the Jewish community, the barons became more compliant in raising taxes for the Crown. This growing alliance, coupled with the underlying anti-Jewish feelings fostered by the Church, spelled the death of the medieval Jewish community.

Edward I signed the Edict of Expulsion on 18 July, 1290 (Tisha B’Av), giving the Jews until 1
November to leave, in exchange for £100,000 in taxes from the barons. “A shipload was landed on the Goodwin Sands by a facetious English sea captain. When the tide began to rise, he sailed away, telling the Jews to pray for help to Moses.”¹⁷ The decimated and impoverished Jewish community was allowed to take only what they could carry with them; most returned to France, from whence their ancestors had arrived 200 years earlier, only to be expelled sixteen years later, by Philip the Fair in 1306.¹⁸

The toxic combination of religious and economic hatred towards the Jews led to their expulsion. England was the first country to level the accusation of blood libel against the Jews. England was also the first European country to expel its Jewish community. England has the ignominious distinction of having taught the world how to maltreat its minority Jewish community.²


¹⁸ Johnson, p. 213; Abulafia p. 104; www.oxfordjewishheritage.co.uk.
Happy Purim!